

Overcoming Depression

Everybody feels "down" or "blue" sometimes. But, if these feelings are very strong or last for most of the day nearly every day for 2 weeks or longer, they may be due to a medical illness called depression. The good news is that depression can be treated. You do not have to face this problem without help.

Here are some warning signs of depression.

Changes in the way you feel:

- You feel sad, hopeless, or guilty most of the time.
- You feel tired or lack energy.
- You have thoughts of suicide or death.

Changes in sleeping and eating habits:

- You sleep either too much or too little.
- Your appetite has changed. You have gained or lost weight.

Changes in daily living:

- You have lost interest and pleasure in daily activities.
- You have problems making decisions or thinking clearly.

If you have had most of these symptoms for at least 2 weeks, you may be suffering from depression. Talk to your doctor about whether you are depressed and what you should do about it.

The sooner you get treatment for depression, the sooner you will begin to feel better. The longer you wait, the harder depression is to treat.

Depression usually is treated with counseling, medicine, or both.

Medicines for depression are not addicting or habit forming. They work for people with severe depression and may be useful for people with mild to moderate depression.

Treatment works gradually over several weeks. If you do not start to feel better after this time, tell your doctor. It may take some time to find what works best for you.

Reference Source: "The Pocket Guide to Good Health for Adults." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: May 2003.